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Learning Lessons with Knowledge Audits

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Abstract

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has committed to become a learning organization. But the use of evaluation for learning may be less important than that of other inputs, such as self-evaluation and training, and evaluation results may only marginally support policy, strategy, and operational changes. In 2006, concerned about the small number of downloads of its evaluation reports through the Internet, a corollary of user interest in a world driven by information technology, the Operations Evaluation Department in ADB determined to apply knowledge management to lesson learning. In 2007, it formulated a strategic framework to improve the organizational culture, management system, business processes, information technology solutions, community of practice, and external relations and networking for that. The framework holds promise not only in the department but, more importantly, vis-à-vis its interfaces with other departments in ADB, developing member countries of ADB, and the international evaluation community. It sets the stage for regular annual knowledge audits for systematic identification and analysis of knowledge needs, products and services, flows, uses, users, and gaps from the perspective of learning lessons. It also permits formulation of annual business plans to deliver outputs steadily against each interface. This paper explains the strategic framework. It also describes the knowledge audit methodology developed in 2007 to tie in with the department's audiences. The online, questionnaire-based survey of perceptions conducted as a first exercise that year provided ready and multiple entry points against which the department can take measures to that intent, as well as a comprehensive baseline assessment against which to judge progress. Fundamentally, the paper contends that evaluation agencies should move from "make-and-sell," at the simplest level, to "sense-and-respond" in ways that are increasingly satisfying to stakeholders. Knowledge from evaluations will not be used effectively if the specific organizational context, knowledge, and relationships of evaluation agencies, and the external environment they face, are not dealt with in an integrated and coherent manner. Knowledge management can shed light on possible operating frameworks for this and knowledge management initiatives can be applied to catalyze and facilitate identification, creation, storage, sharing, and use of lessons. That would be knowledge utilization indeed.

Keywords

knowledge audits, organizational culture, knowledge management

Comments

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Learning Lessons with Knowledge Audits

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has committed to become a learning organization. But the use of evaluation for learning may be less important than that of other inputs, such as self-evaluation and training, and evaluation results may only marginally support policy, strategy, and operational changes. In 2006, concerned about the small number of downloads of its evaluation reports through the Internet, a corollary of user interest in a world driven by information technology, the Operations Evaluation Department in ADB determined to apply knowledge management to lesson learning. In 2007, it formulated a strategic framework to improve the organizational culture, management system, business processes, information technology solutions, community of practice, and external relations and networking for that. The framework holds promise not only in the department but, more importantly, vis-à-vis its interfaces with other departments in ADB, developing member countries of ADB, and the international evaluation community. It sets the stage for regular annual knowledge audits for systematic identification and analysis of knowledge needs, products and services, flows, uses, users, and gaps from the perspective of learning lessons. It also permits formulation of annual business plans to deliver outputs steadily against each interface. This paper explains the strategic framework. It also describes the knowledge audit methodology developed in 2007 to tie in with the department's audiences. The online, questionnaire-based survey of perceptions conducted as a first exercise that year provided ready and multiple entry points against which the department can take measures to that intent, as well as a comprehensive baseline assessment against which to judge progress. Fundamentally, the paper contends that evaluation agencies should move from "make-and-sell," at the simplest level, to "sense-and-respond" in ways that are increasingly satisfying to stakeholders. Knowledge from evaluations will not be used effectively if the specific organizational context, knowledge, and relationships of evaluation agencies, and the external environment they face, are not dealt with in an integrated and coherent manner. Knowledge management can shed light on possible operating frameworks for this and knowledge management initiatives can be applied to catalyze and facilitate identification, creation, storage, sharing, and use of lessons. That would be knowledge utilization indeed.

1. INTRODUCTION

1. In the Asian Development Bank (ADB), independent evaluations conducted by the Operations Evaluation Department (OED) aim to provide effective feedback on performance to improve the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of ongoing and future operations, and to enhance thereby contributions to the development of ADB's developing member countries.[1] Since 2004, OED reports to the Board of Directors of the bank rather than to its Management. Behavioral autonomy, avoidance of conflicts of interest, insulation from external influence, and organizational independence have advanced its mission to help ADB become a learning organization that continuously improves its development effectiveness and is accountable to its stakeholders. However, producing credible, timely, and objective data, information, and knowledge that describe organizational performance is meaningful only if what is learned informs decision making. In 2006, concerned about the small number of downloads of its evaluation reports through the Internet, a corollary of user interest in a world driven by information technology, OED decided to promote knowledge management to foster lesson learning. Encouraged by positive feedback from other departments, and mindful of the need to increase value-added from operations evaluation, it then formulated plans for establishment of a knowledge management unit in 2007 to catalyze and facilitate identification, creation, storage, sharing, and use of lessons. With reference to *Learning Lessons in ADB*,[2] which guides the knowledge management initiatives of the department, this paper outlines the strategic framework for knowledge management in operations evaluation in ADB and sketches the knowledge management initiatives introduced in 2007 and to date. Since even improved and well-used evaluation systems do not generate learning automatically, the paper explains also how the department then moved to generate learning through stakeholder involvement and via communication in a dynamic organizational context, and how regular audits of ADB's lessons architecture are expected to support that. The paper leans on *Auditing the Lessons Architecture*,[3] which placed emphasis on meaning, management, and measurement to examine what helps or hinders the transfer of knowledge through evaluation studies. The annual sovereign and nonsovereign lending volume of ADB is typically $6 billion,[4] with technical assistance usually totaling about $180 million a year. Plausibly, the return on investment in lesson learning for operational and developmental impact is likely to be high, and maximizing it is a legitimate concern.

2. LEARNING LESSONS IN ADB

2.1 Knowledge, Relationships, Context, and External Environment

2. Knowledge must not be seen as something that is supplied from one person to another, or from better-off countries to developing countries, but rather as something that can flow back and forth and be continually improved, adapted, and refreshed using knowledge management tools. What is more, the latter are more effective where the specific knowledge, relationships, and context of organizations and the external environment they face are dealt with in an integrated and coherent manner. Figure 1 demonstrates the importance of using knowledge management tools with respect to the specific milieu in which ADB operates. The framework, formulated by the Overseas Development Institute to analyze and compare processes of change in a holistic manner, is applicable to other development agencies and, with small adjustments, to organizations in general.

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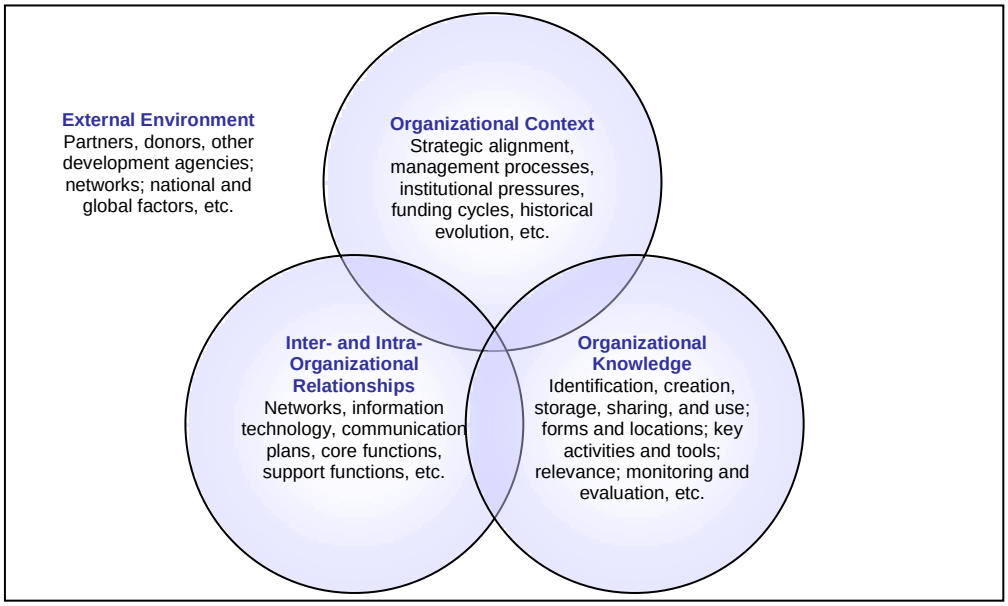
[1] Evaluation at ADB has two major dimensions: (i) self-evaluation by the units responsible for particular development interventions, and (ii) independent evaluation by OED. Both are governed by principles of usefulness, credibility, and transparency. The second, as the name indicates, is made stronger by the additional principle of independence, and the associated attributes of impartiality and freedom from bias. This paper relates to independent evaluation.

[2] ADB. 2007. *Learning Lessons in ADB*. Manila. Available: www.adb.org/documents/reports/learning-lessons-adb/strategic-framework-2007-2009.asp

[3] ADB. 2007. *Auditing the Lessons Architecture*. Available: www.adb.org/documents/studies/auditing-lessons-architecture/in371-07.asp

[4] This does not include cofinancing and the counterpart funds that the governments of developing member countries associate with ADB's operations, which amounted to about $8.2 billion and $4.9 billion, respectively, in 2006 for loans totaling a higher-than-average $7.5 billion.

Figure 1: A Holistic View of Knowledge and Knowledge Management Tools

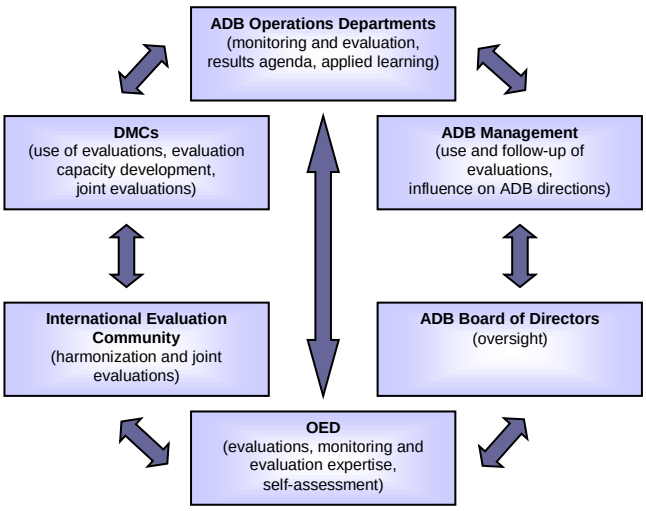


Source: Adapted from Ramalingam, Ben. 2005. *Implementing Knowledge Strategies: Lessons from International Development Agencies*. Working Paper 244. Overseas Development Institute.

2.2 Audiences

3. In ADB, OED conducts evaluations to find out what results are being achieved, what improvements should be considered, and what is being learned. It does so with systematic and impartial assessment of policies, strategies, programs, and projects, including their design, implementation, and results. Sharing lessons[5] also demonstrates good governance and advances understanding of what ADB aims to accomplish, thereby generating support for it. Figure 2 illustrates the principal audiences for evaluations, using ADB as an example.

Figure 2: Audiences for Evaluations



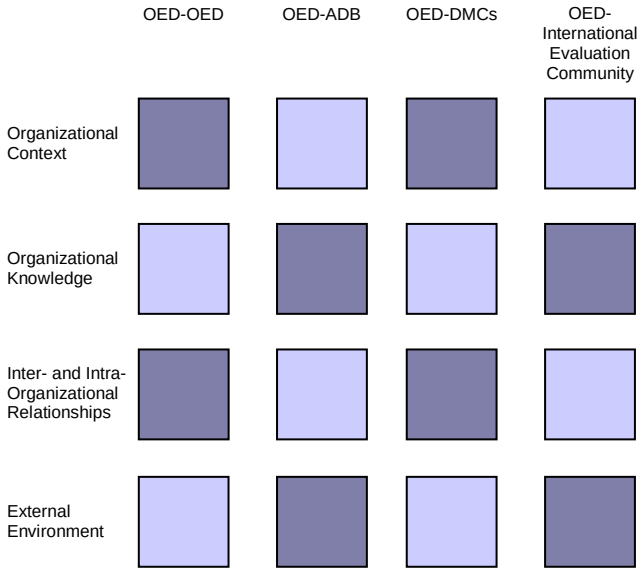
Source: Adapted from Independent Evaluation Group—World Bank. 2006. *2006 Annual Report on Operations Evaluation*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

[5] Lessons are of two types: operational and developmental. Operational lessons relate, among others, to performance measurement, aid coordination, resource requirements, team building and coordination, procurement practices, delivery and reporting systems, and logistics. Developmental lessons pertain to realization of development results, improvement of developmental practice, and delivery on priorities.

2.3 Interfaces

4. Inter- and intra-organizational relationships encompass OED itself, other departments,[6] ADB's developing member countries (DMCs), and the international evaluation community. Figure 3 shows these interfaces with the specific organizational context, knowledge, and relationships of OED and the external environment it faces to structure entry points for lesson learning.

Figure 3: Interfaces for Lesson Learning



Source: ADB. 2007. *Learning Lessons in ADB*. Manila.

2.4 Architecture

5. Knowledge management must be embedded into all of an organization's business processes. It is not an activity delivered exclusively by a distinct business unit or a particular process. An architecture must be built to initiate and implement organization-wide knowledge management initiatives. Here, four pillars are critical to success. They are: (i) leadership, (ii) organization, (iii) technology, and (iv) learning. Table 1 outlines the core functions, typical activities, and implementation elements of a stable architecture for lesson learning.

Table 1: Architecture for Lesson Learning

Pillar	Function	Typical Activity	Illustrative Implementation Element
Leadership	Drive values for knowledge management.	• Identify knowledge critical to learning lessons in ADB. • Conduct work-centered analysis. • Plan high-level strategic approach. • Establish goal and prioritize objectives. • Define requirements and develop measurement program. • Promote values and norms. • Implement strategy.	• Strategic planning • Vision sharing • Definition of goal and objectives • Executive commitment • Knowledge management programs tied to metrics • Formal knowledge management roles in existence • Tangible rewards for use of knowledge management • Encouragement, recognition, and reward for knowledge

[6] Primarily these are operations departments. But OED also interacts with non-operations departments and offices including the Asian Development Bank Institute, the Economics and Research Department, the Regional and Sustainable Development Department, and the Strategy and Policy Department.

Pillar	Function	Typical Activity	Illustrative Implementation Element
			sharing • Communications
Organization	Organize to support values for knowledge management.	• Identify critical knowledge gaps, opportunities, and risks. • Develop business process model. • Engage key audiences with incentives.	• Organizational structure • Organizational culture • Business process workflows • Business process reengineering • Management by objectives • Total quality management • Operating procedures for knowledge sharing • Knowledge performance metrics • Communications
Technology	Collect and connect knowledge.	• Enhance system integration and access. • Deploy intelligent agents for people. • Exploit semantic technologies. • Reuse existing capabilities in new ways. • Monitor, measure, and report knowledge performance metrics.	• Email • Data warehousing • Data management software • Multimedia repositories • Groupware • Decision support systems • Intranet • Search engines • Business modeling systems • Intelligent agents • Neural networks • Lessons learned systems • Video conferencing • Communications
Learning	Cultivate and utilize virtual teams and exchange forums for knowledge management.	• Enliven collaboration. • Facilitate communities of practice. • Encourage storytelling. • Recognize and reward knowledge sharing.	• Tacit and explicit knowledge • Capturing, organizing, and disseminating knowledge • Team learning • Management support for continuous learning • Virtual teams • Exchange forums • Communities of practice • Encouragement, recognition, and reward for innovation • Communications

Source: ADB. 2007. *Learning Lessons in ADB*. Manila.

2.5 Knowledge Management Tools

6. Learning lessons is contingent on improving organizational performance in five areas of competence. They are: (i) strategy development, (ii) management techniques, (iii) collaboration mechanisms, (iv) knowledge sharing and learning, and (v) knowledge capture and storage.[7] Sundry knowledge management tools can support endeavors in each area, including, for example, knowledge audits, activity-based knowledge mapping, action learning sets, peer assists, and exit interviews. Conspicuously, the advent of the Internet has brought information technologies that complement and supplement the knowledge management tools at hand to make knowledge flow more effectively around and across organizations. The technologies include e-learning, web conferencing, collaborative software, content management systems, Yellow Pages, email lists, wikis, and web logs (blogs). Where an organization such as ADB might aim to be in specified time and the priority areas of competence that it might therefore decide to focus on can be investigated by means of such diagnostic tools.

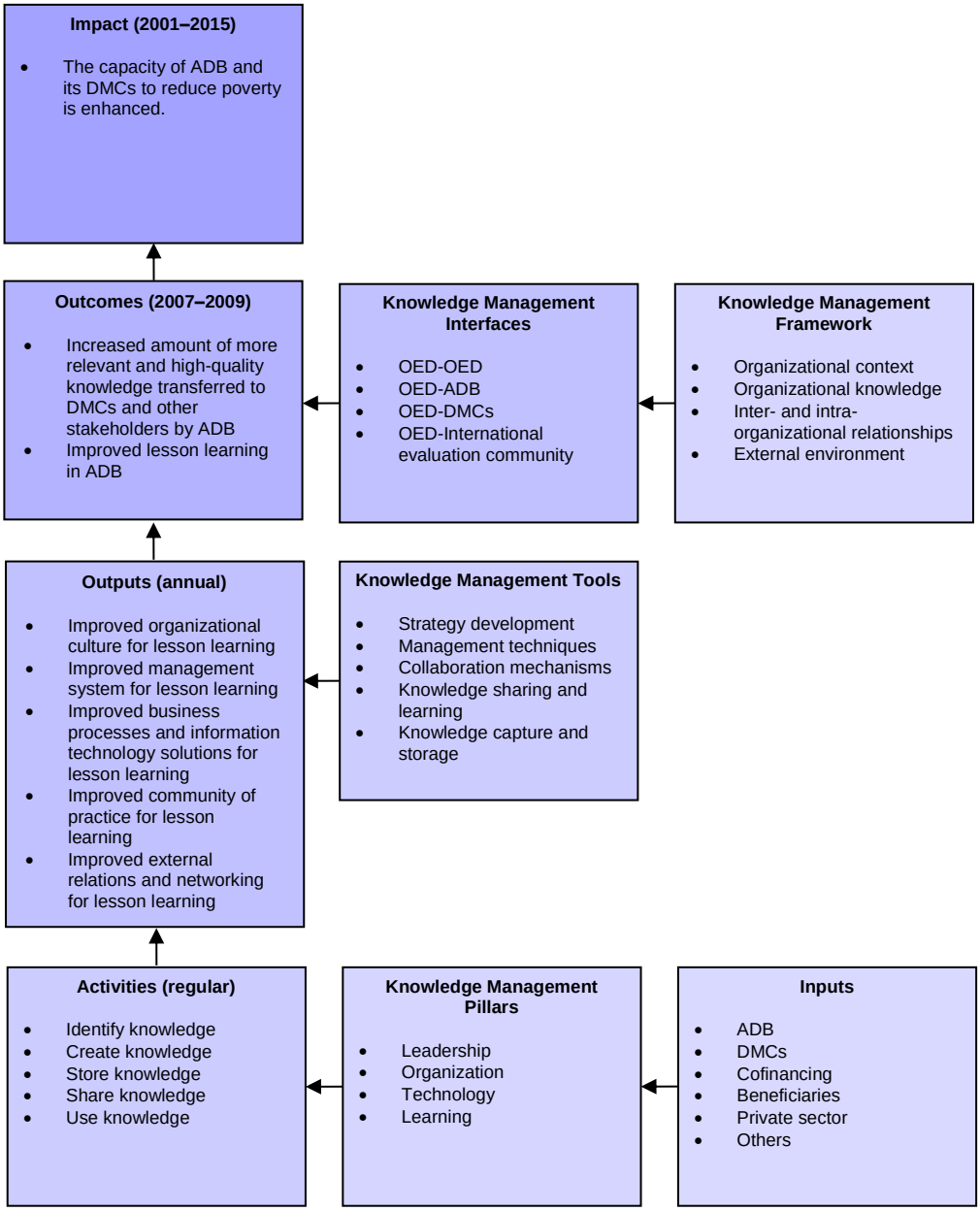
2.6 Putting It All Together: The Strategic Framework

7. Drawing the elements of knowledge, relationships, context, and external environment; audiences; interfaces; architecture; and knowledge management tools in a conceptual structure generates the

[7] Chris Collison and Geoff Parcell. 2001. *Learning to Fly: Practical Knowledge Management from Leading and Learning Organizations*. Capstone Publishing. The Five Competencies Framework helps to determine priorities for immediate action by selecting the area that will yield the greatest benefits if improved.

operating framework within which decisions on knowledge management initiatives can be taken and implemented. Figure 4 depicts the operating framework within which knowledge management tools are leveraged by OED for lesson learning in ADB. The operating framework and the performance regime that drive it are to be reviewed every three years.

Figure 4: Operating Framework for Lesson Learning



Source: ADB. 2007. *Learning Lessons in ADB*. Manila.

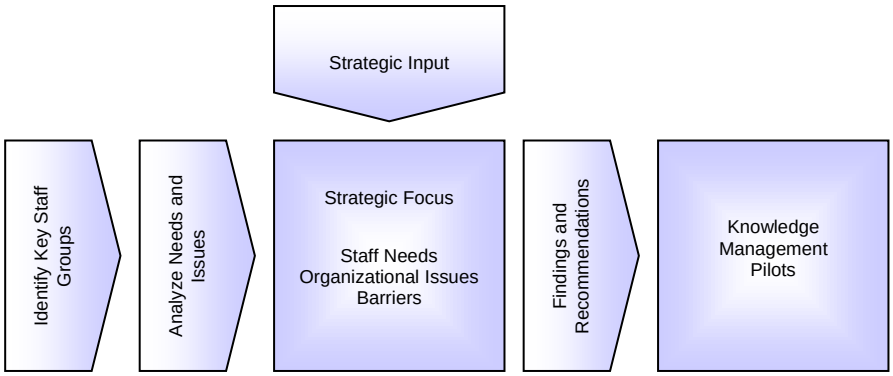
2.7 Business Planning

8. Organizations looking to knowledge management develop business plans that are aligned with their goal and objectives. To raise knowledge vigilance to the point where attitudes are realistic and automatic, and tacit knowledge is internalized, such plans usually identify needs and issues within the organization and are couched against a framework for addressing these. Needs and issues, as well as the business processes associated with them, are typically determined by (i) the external environment; (ii) the mandate, vision, goal, and objectives of the organization; (iii) the overall strategic direction; (iv) the

size and spread of the organization; (v) organizational history and culture; (vi) staff skills and experience; and (vii) available resources.

9. The elemental steps of business planning are (i) identify key staff groups within the organization; (ii) conduct comprehensive and holistic analyses with the key staff groups to identify needs and issues and barriers to organizational performance; (iii) supplement the analyses with inputs from managers and organizational strategy documents to determine an overall strategic focus; (iv) develop findings and recommendations to address the needs and issues and to tackle the barriers identified; and (v) implement a series of knowledge management pilots based on the findings and recommendations, leveraged by suitable knowledge management tools, and with concern for measuring the effectiveness of outreach. Figure 5 illustrates the process commonly followed to develop a business plan for knowledge management.

Figure 5: Developing a Knowledge Management Business Plan



Source: ADB. 2007. *Learning Lessons in ADB*. Manila.

10. Learning is a process, not an attainment. Hence, in ADB, OED's knowledge management business plans are aligned against ADB's to set in train the drive for continuous improvement that is at the heart of strategic frameworks. Moreover, the annual business planning process specifies that regular annual knowledge audits linked to annual business plans will deliver outputs steadily against each interface based on operational needs and priorities but also resources, with flexibility and adaptability.

3. AUDITING THE LESSONS ARCHITECTURE

3.1 The Setting of Knowledge Audits

11. A knowledge advantage is a sustainable advantage that provides increasing returns as it is used. However, building a knowledge position is a long-term enterprise that requires foresight and planning. In the knowledge-based economies that emerged in the mid- to late 1990s, the organizations with the best chance to succeed and thrive are learning organizations that generate, communicate, and leverage their intellectual assets. In *The Fifth Discipline*,[8] Peter Senge labels them "…organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together." Organizational learning promotes organizational health.[9] As a result, organizational performance is high.[10]

12. The literature on learning organizations is oriented to action and geared to the use of strategies and tools to identify, promote, and evaluate the quality of learning processes. In contrast, that on

[8] Peter Senge. 1990. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Currency Double Day.

[9] The notion of organizational ill-health is easily understood and needs no explanation. As long ago as 1962, Warren Bennis identified three dimensions of it: (i) adaptability, (ii) coherence of identity, and (iii) the ability to perceive the world correctly. The point here is that organizational learning can provide a necessary and valuable contribution to organizational health by advancing the shared values, clarity of purpose, institutionalized leadership, technical capability, open and honest channels of communications, and ability to deal constructively with conflict. All are qualities that employees expect from their work nowadays.

[10] Organizational performance comprises the actual outputs or results of an organization as measured against its intentions. It is commonly examined in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. The forces that drive these are organizational context, organizational knowledge, inter- and intra-organizational relationships, and the external environment.

organizational learning concentrates on the detached collection and analysis of the processes involved in individual and collective learning inside organizations. That is to say, organizational learning is the activity and the process by which organizations eventually reach the ideal of a learning organization. The dividing line between the two is the extent to which proponents emphasize organizational learning as a technical or a social process.

13. Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger think that learning is inherently a social process that cannot be separated from the context in which it takes place. They coined the term "community of practice" in 1991 based on their work on learning theory in the late 1980s and early 1990s (even if the phenomenon to which it refers is age old). More recently, communities of practice have been associated with knowledge management as organizations recognize their potential contributions to human and social capital as well as to organizational performance.

14. The principal competitive advantage of successful organizations is their culture. It comprises the attitudes, experiences, beliefs, and values of the organization, acquired through social learning, that control the way individuals and groups in the organization interact with one another and with parties outside it. Observers recognize a correlation between the orientation of organizational culture and organizational learning. Indeed, the inability to change organizational behavior is repeatedly cited as the biggest hindrance to knowledge management. For this reason, even if the need to take a hard look at an organization's culture extends the time required to prepare knowledge management initiatives, the benefits from doing so are likely to tell. Organizations that are more successful in implementing knowledge management initiatives embody both operations-oriented and people-oriented attributes. Typically, a learning culture is an organizational environment that enables, encourages, values, rewards, and uses the learning of its members, both individually and collectively.

15. Learning must be related to what people know and what they need to know to perform their jobs well—and hopefully better. Crucially, material must be tailored to the audiences targeted, and produced in a form that they can use. But managers must also actively support use of evaluations because applying knowledge has costs. Besides time and money, the latter can include the need to unlearn previous practices, and disruption to established relationships. Only if these two conditions hold will the costly gap between evaluation and planning be bridged.

3.2 Auditing Knowledge

3.2.1 Definition and Purpose

16. Developing a knowledge-sharing culture is a change process on the way to better organizational performance. To achieve that change, an organization needs a vision of where it wants to be and an accurate picture of where it is now—that is, its current reality. A knowledge audit is one way of taking that picture. What is a knowledge audit? The traditional concept of an audit is an evaluation of a person, business, system, process, project, or product by an independent third party. Financial audits are well understood. They examine the financial statements of a company to check performance against standards. A knowledge audit works differently, and some demystification is called for. It is by and large—granted differing objects, breadth of coverage, and levels of sophistication—a qualitative review (or inventory, survey, check) of an organization's knowledge health at both the macro and micro levels. The defining feature of a knowledge audit is that it places people at the center of concerns: it purports to find out what people know, and what they do with the knowledge they have. It can be described as an investigation of the knowledge needs of an organization and the interconnectivity among leadership, organization, technology, and learning in meeting these. Put in a different way, a knowledge audit is an investigation of the strengths and weaknesses of an organization's knowledge, and of the opportunities and threats that face it.

17. A knowledge audit can have multiple purposes, but the most common is to provide tangible evidence of what knowledge an organization needs, where that knowledge is, how it is being used, what

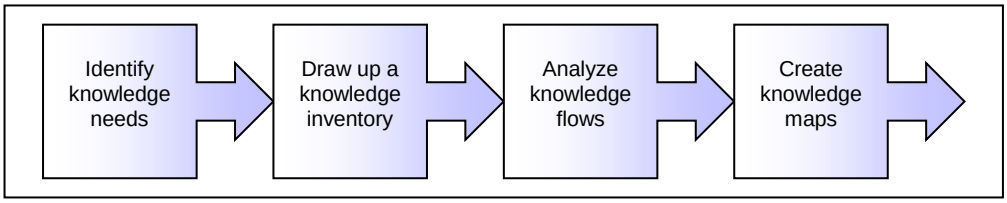
problems and difficulties exist, and what improvements can be made. Although there can be no blueprint, a typical knowledge audit will—not necessarily at the same time or level of detail[11]—query the following:

- What are an organization's knowledge needs?
- What tacit and explicit knowledge assets does it have and where are they?
- How does knowledge flow within the organization, formally and informally, and to and from clients and relevant organizations?
- How is that knowledge identified, created, stored, shared, and used?
- What obstacles are there to knowledge flows, e.g., to what extent do its people, business processes, and technology currently support or hamper the effective movement of knowledge?
- What gaps and duplications exist in the organization's knowledge?

3.2.2 Constituents of Knowledge Audits

18. The typical constituents of knowledge audits, each of which can be conducted at different levels of complexity using a variety of tools,[12] are shown in Figure 6.[13] They are preferably, but not necessarily in the following order: (i) knowledge needs analysis, (ii) knowledge inventory analysis, (ii) knowledge flow analysis, and (iv) knowledge mapping. Throughout investigations, elements of knowledge, relationships, context, and external environment should be borne in mind, together with the fact that about 80% of an organization's knowledge is tacit—the greatest challenge lies in the audit of that.

Figure 6: Knowledge Audit Constituents



Source: ADB. 2007. *Auditing the Lessons Architecture*. Manila.

3.3 Knowledge Audit Methodology

19. In 2007, OED particularized a knowledge audit methodology, its principal means, and associated time frame, to be applied in four phases spanning about 5 months. The methodology draws on the elements of knowledge, relationships, context, and external environment; interfaces; and architecture deemed most relevant to the department. The four phases are (i) knowledge audit preparations, (ii) knowledge audit analysis, (iii) knowledge audit review, and (iv) business planning. Box 1 enumerates possible related steps and activities and Box 2 sketches an indicative time frame for implementation. Since knowledge management is a *process* for optimizing and leveraging the stores of knowledge in an organization, the accent placed (concurrently or in turn) on each constituent of a knowledge audit will depend on where an organization is and where it wants to be. Boxes 1–2 should be interpreted in view of that. A second important caveat is that the following section on the survey of perceptions conducted by OED in 2007, which emphasized identification of knowledge needs, should not be taken as all that a knowledge audit can be.

Box 1: Knowledge Audit Methodology—Suggested Steps and Activities

Phase 1	**1. Plan Knowledge Audit** • Identify objectives.	**2. Assimilate Core Knowledge Activities** • Identify.

[11] The audit could span the whole organization, but preferably cover constituent parts of it. For the same reason that opinion polls do not sample the entire population, marginal returns diminish as the scale of related exercises increases. The same consideration applies to the number of questions that might be posed.

[12] The common tools used for knowledge audits are face-to-face and telephone interviews; structured, semi-structured, and unstructured questionnaires; workshops; focus group discussions; and online consultations. Other data and information can be gathered by referring to the documentation of the organization, conducting direct inspections, and examining the information and communications technology infrastructure, including the organization's website.

[13] Naturally, in a large and diverse organization, the dimensions and conduct of a knowledge audit will differ radically from that applicable to a small, less complex one.

	• Conduct background investigations. • Hold preliminary discussions.	• Create. • Store. • Share. • Use.	
	3. Delineate Interface Characteristics • OED–OED • OED–ADB • OED–developing member countries • OED–international evaluation community	**4. Identify and Liaise with Key Audiences** • Agree on interface representatives. • Make initial contact.	**5. Select and Design Audit Forms** • Consider interface characteristics. • Formulate audit deliverables.
Phase 2	**6. Identify Knowledge Needs** • Investigate what important knowledge the interfaces need to meet goals and objectives. • Determine what important knowledge is available and what is missing. • Consider, with attention to people, business processes, and technology, how faster access to important knowledge might be secured.	**7. Draw up Knowledge Inventory** • Track down explicit knowledge products and services, their locations, purposes, relevance, and accessibility. • Make out tacit knowledge about who the key audiences are, where they are, what they do, what they know, and what they learn. • Identify gaps in tacit and explicit knowledge.	
	8. Analyze Knowledge Flows • Examine how knowledge products and services flow in OED, and to and from its interfaces, with attention to people, business processes, and technology. • Characterize stock-based and flow-based knowledge, trends and patterns, and efficiency and effectiveness.	**9. Create Knowledge Maps** • Locate knowledge products and services and map out flows, constraints, and sinks. • Map knowledge gaps. • Analyze social networks.	
Phase 3	**10. Assess Knowledge Audit Findings** • Analyze evidence. • Suggest courses and means of action. • Devise improvements.	**11. Discuss Knowledge Audit** • Carry out after-action reviews and retrospects. • Conduct in-house workshops.	**12. Close Knowledge Audit** • Incorporate suggestions for improvement. • Identify matters for follow-up.
Phase 4	**13. Decide on Knowledge Management Initiatives** • Prioritize knowledge management initiatives. • Design knowledge management initiatives.	**14. Formulate Business Plans** • Propose capital, operational, administrative, and recurrent expenditures. • Submit annual budget document.	

Source: ADB. 2007. *Auditing the Lessons Architecture*. Manila.

Box 2: Indicative Knowledge Audit Time Frame

Phase	Activity	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5
1	**Knowledge Audit Preparations**					
	Plan knowledge audit					
	Assimilate core knowledge activities					
	Delineate interface characteristics					
	Identify and liaise with key audiences					
	Select and design audit forms					
2	**Knowledge Audit Analysis**					
	Identify knowledge needs					
	Draw up knowledge inventory					
	Analyze knowledge flows					
	Create knowledge maps					
3	**Knowledge Audit Review**					
	Assess knowledge audit findings					
	Discuss knowledge audit					
	Close knowledge audit					
4	**Business Planning**					
	Decide on knowledge management initiatives					
	Formulate business plans					

Source: ADB. 2007. *Auditing the Lessons Architecture*. Manila.

20. To underpin future knowledge audits, OED formulated in 2007 survey questionnaires that drew out perceptions of the performance of independent evaluation across the four interfaces. The questionnaires were designed against the Five Competencies Framework. The framework of organizational competence for knowledge management comprises (i) strategy development, (ii) management techniques, (iii) collaboration mechanisms, (iv) knowledge sharing and learning, and (v)

knowledge capture and storage.[14] The questionnaires were comprehensive, organized, systematic, and inclusive; they provide the framework within which OED can search for continual opportunities to ameliorate the independent evaluation function and its feedback mechanisms. The responses to the questionnaires also revealed rich seams of "as-is," baseline information, which will be mined vigorously. Box 3 shows for each interface the area of competence on which the questionnaires centered.

Box 3: Perceptions Survey Questionnaires—Interface and Areas of Competence

Interface	Strategy Development	Management Techniques	Collaboration Mechanisms	Knowledge Sharing and Learning	Knowledge Capture and Storage
OED–OED	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
OED–ADB	✓		✓	✓	✓
OED–DMCs			✓	✓	✓
OED–IEC			✓	✓	✓

ADB = Asian Development Bank, DMC = developing member country, IEC = international evaluation community, OED = Operations Evaluation Department.
Source: ADB. 2007. *Auditing the Lessons Architecture*. Manila.

3.4 The Survey of Perceptions

21. The survey that opened OED's first knowledge audit aimed to gain insight into how people within the four interfaces perceive the department's knowledge management activities. From the results, OED measured awareness of and identified gaps in the department's knowledge products and services. The Five Competencies Framework was used to assess the department's organizational performance. This framework identifies these areas of organizational competence for knowledge management as (i) strategy development, wherein tools are used to help an organization achieve a particular goal in knowledge management through a long-term plan of action; (ii) management techniques, which cover a range of practices from assessing the forces for and against desired organizational changes to assessing managerial approaches to mistakes, in order to do things right; (iii) collaboration mechanisms, which pertain to facilitating effective practices in working with others; (iv) knowledge learning and sharing, which means using techniques to learn from and improve future activities; and (v) knowledge capture and storage, wherein routines are applied to ensure that an organization retains essential knowledge. For each interface, survey questionnaires covered only the areas of competence deemed most relevant.

22. The survey adopted a variant of the Likert scale[15] to evaluate the perceived level of organizational performance per competence area, wherein respondents specify the extent of their agreement with a statement. Five choices were given per question to gauge perception of OED's competences: (i) never, (ii) seldom the case, (iii) sometimes the case, (iv) often the case, and (v) always the case. Two methods were used to determine overall perception of organizational performance in each area of competence. The first was based on the responses of the majority per question. The second established an objective measure by computing the weighted average score to account for the perception of the entire sample.

3.5 Survey Results

23. Box 4 gives a snapshot of the perception of the performance of OED in each area of competence by respondents from each interface.[16] Respondents from OED thought that the department is doing well in the areas of strategy development, collaboration mechanisms, and knowledge capture and storage. But the department is "on the fence" in knowledge sharing and learning, and its competence with management techniques must get better. Respondents from other departments felt that OED does well only in strategy development. They were ambivalent with regard to collaboration mechanisms. They recommended that the department should deploy more efforts in the areas of knowledge sharing and learning, and knowledge capture and storage. Respondents from the international evaluation community

[14] A competency approach befits organizational learning. It offers safeguards against drain of knowledge, inappropriate use of knowledge, and accumulation of poor knowledge.
[15] Details of the Likert scale are at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/likert_scale. A Likert scale is usually composed of an odd number of points measuring positive or negative responses to a statement.
[16] Sadly, no responses were received from evaluation agencies in DMCs, with implications for the tools that can be applied to that interface in the future.

felt that the department is doing well in all three areas of competence regarding which their opinions were sought.

Box 4: Summary of Perceptions by Area of Competence

Interface	Strategy Development	Management Techniques	Collaboration Mechanisms	Knowledge Sharing and Learning	Knowledge Capture and Storage
OED–OED	✓	X	✓	?	✓
OED–ADB	✓		?	X	X
OED–IEC			✓	✓	✓

ADB = Asian Development Bank, IEC = international evaluation community, OED = Operations Evaluation Department.
Note: ✓ = more than half of the items in the questionnaire were rated as "often the case" to "always the case" by most of the respondents; ? = half of the items in the questionnaire were rated as "often the case" to "always the case" by most of the respondents, while the other half were rated as "sometimes the case" to "never;" X = more than half of the items in the questionnaire were rated as "sometimes the case" to "never" by most respondents.
Source: ADB. 2007. *Auditing the Lessons Architecture*. Manila.

3.6 Associated Initiatives

24. The survey of perceptions substantiated the basis of the knowledge management initiatives that OED introduced throughout 2007. It clarified the need for others. Among the new knowledge products and services developed that year, *Learning Curves*[17] are handy, two-paged quick references designed to feed findings and recommendations from evaluation to a broader range of clients. *Success Rates*[18] present condensed information on successful ADB projects. The Evaluation Information System[19] is an online database of lessons, recommendations, and ADB Management responses. The department hosts the secretariat of the Evaluation Cooperation Group.[20] It has also overhauled ECGnet,[21] the group's communication tool. *Evaluation Alerts* are targeted information bytes delivered to personal mailboxes. Methods and guidelines for using plain English, disseminating findings and recommendations, and conducting exit interviews have been prepared. The evaluation pages on adb.org[22] have been refurbished from top to bottom. They are updated daily and are now one of the most accessed first-level directories in adb.org. In 2007, OED formulated regional technical assistance for capacity development for monitoring and evaluation, expected also to suggest an ADB strategy for evaluation capacity development.[23] The department advertises its knowledge products and services on *ADB Today*[24] and adb.org (and through other channels and at several venues) with one-time, near-term, and continuous efforts. The survey of perceptions suggested other opportunities, now nearing completion. They include *Evaluation Chats*,[25] a communication tool that will underpin the formal establishment in 2008 of an evaluation community of practice focused on the conduct and dissemination of strategic evaluations, harmonization of performance indicators and evaluation methodologies, and development of capacity in evaluation and evaluative thinking. OED's knowledge management initiatives are framed deliberately to increase value-added from operations evaluation, and are managed with knowledge performance metrics. Client feedback is sought regularly through various means.

25. Box 5 identifies the knowledge management tools that might be leveraged to fill the knowledge management gaps identified, and emphasizes with shading the areas of organizational competence found wanting.

[17] Available: www.adb.org/evaluation/reports.asp?s=1&type=15
[18] Available: www.adb.org/evaluation/reports.asp?s=1&type=16
[19] Available: http://evis.adb.org/
[20] The Evaluation Cooperation Group was established by the heads of evaluation in multilateral development banks in 1996. Its membership comprises the African Development Bank, ADB, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, European Investment Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank Group. The United Nations Evaluation Group and the Evaluation Network of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development are observer members.
[21] Available: www.ecgnet.org
[22] Available: www.adb.org/evaluation/
[23] Progressively more, evaluation ownership must move from ADB to DMCs.
[24] *ADB Today* is a daily e-information resource for all ADB staff in headquarters, resident missions, and representative offices. It is the main internal communication vehicle to keep ADB staff abreast of events and activities of ADB-wide interest. It is produced and edited each working day by the Department of External Relations with inputs from other departments.
[25] Available: www.adb.org/evaluation/chats.asp. Membership of *Evaluation Chats* is open to OED staff. Staff of other departments and other interested parties can be granted access upon request.

Box 5: Knowledge Management Tools Prioritized for Leverage

Interface	Strategy Development	Management Techniques	Collaboration Mechanisms	Knowledge Sharing and Learning	Knowledge Capture and Storage
OED–OED	• Knowledge Audit • Most Significant Change • Outcome Mapping • Scenario Testing and Visioning	• Five Competencies Framework	• Communities of Practice • Action Learning Sets • Social Technologies	• Peer Assists • Challenge Sessions • After-Action Reviews and Retrospects • Intranet Strategies	• Taxonomies for Documents and Folders • Exit Interviews • Shared Network Drives
OED–ADB	• Scenario Testing and Visioning		• Communities of Practice • Social Technologies	• Peer Assists • Challenge Sessions • After-Action Reviews and Retrospects • Intranet Strategies	• Staff Profile Pages • Web Logs
OED–IEC				• Stories • Peer Assists • After-Action Reviews and Retrospects	• Staff Profile Pages • Web Logs

ADB = Asian Development Bank, IEC = international evaluation community, OED = Operations Evaluation Department.
Source: ADB. 2007. *Auditing the Lessons Architecture*. Manila.

4. CONCLUSION

26. OED's mission is to help ADB become a learning organization that continuously improves its development effectiveness and is accountable to its stakeholders. Several considerations are associated with this: they include adhering to strategic principles, sharpening evaluation strategies, distinguishing recommendation typologies, making recommendations better, reporting evaluation findings, and tracking action on recommendations. *Acting on Recommendations and Learning from Lessons in 2007: Increasing Value Added from Operations Evaluation* proposed steps toward these.[26] This paper has argued that knowledge management can foster knowledge utilization if evaluation agencies adopt a conscious strategy to get the right knowledge to the right people at the right time, and helping them (with incentives) to apply it in ways that strive to improve organizational performance.

[26] ADB. 2007. *Acting on Recommendations and Learning from Lessons in 2007: Increasing Value Added from Operations Evaluation*. Manila. Available: www.adb.org/documents/pers/rpe-oth-2007-15.asp

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